

The Center's News

Note from the Director:

We are approaching half a year of dealing with the pandemic and its economic and social fallout. Most of us would happily go back to the way things were, but it seems obvious that we are all going to have to adjust to a new “normal.”

Whatever new pattern emerges, we at The WILL Center are working to ensure that we are available to you at a time and place that is comfortable for you. We believe we have instituted safety precautions at the office that can protect consumers and staff. We are available to make no-contact house calls as necessary to ensure each of you has what you need to continue to live comfortably in your community.

In the meantime, be safe. Wear a mask. Maintain social distance. Avoid indoor crowds. If it feels wrong to you, do not go there.

Most importantly, take care of yourself. It is a difficult time, so pay attention to the warning signs of stress and depression. Manage your diet. Get exercise. Do things that bring you peace and happiness. If all that is not enough, seek help.

We will get through this if we keep ourselves grounded and help our neighbors, family, and friends.

The WILL Center is in it with you!

Living with Low Vision

Have you been in a situation where you need an extra pair of eyes?

I have a couple of outreach possibilities when you are in that predicament.

These are apps that you can download from the Google or Apple App stores. For these Apps you will need a smart phone. The first is called “Be My Eyes.” This App will

connect you to a volunteer to help with anything such as setting the stove temperature, reading a letter or selection of groceries. The Be My Eyes App can also connect you with the Microsoft Disability Help Desk. The Microsoft help desk person may be in another country and you may experience a language barrier when communicating with these assistants, who are all volunteers. There is no cost to you for this partner.

The second App is “AIRA.” This is an App with a five-minute limit on their free professional help. It connects you with a professional who can guide you through any service you quest. This is a fee-for-service App. There are a variety of pay packages for the AIRA service. The least expensive at the time of this writing is 30 minutes for \$29.95. The AIRA app can be accessed in airports and nationally through the Walgreens stores when you visit each facility. Having an extra pair of eyes can calm your visual frustration and can be a long term or short-term solution to the task at hand.

The Youth Transition Program

The re-opening of schools:

When schools reopen, you can make sure that you are prepared. Review your child’s most recent Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Pay particular attention to the goals in it. Did your child meet these goals? Are there new goals or behaviors that you have noticed because of the pandemic? You may also wish to get a new notebook or create a new Word document that can serve as a communication log for any time you have an interaction with the school. You will want to be sure to document the following: date, time, description of the communication, and who you spoke with. Was anything promised?

After you have reviewed your child’s IEP, are there concerns you would like to have addressed at your next IEP meeting? Has the school communicated any concerns with you?

If you are overwhelmed by all of this, do not worry. There is a solution. You can create a document called “The Parent Agenda.” This document will give you the ability to write down all your concerns in one place. It will also allow you to have a conversation with your child and document any concerns that he or she may have. You can also document best practices of support for your child and make these recommendations to the IEP Team.

After putting these concerns down on paper, you may find that this helps you to better organize your thoughts. You may also find that some of your concerns cannot wait until the next meeting. It is your right as a parent to call an IEP meeting at any time. Make sure

that you make enough copies for everyone. Plus, the agenda will then become part of the record for your child's IEP. If you have any questions, our staff is ready and willing to help you and your student.

Independent Living Program

Travel and outside activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Summer vacation may have looked different in the coronavirus crisis for you and your family this year. Many states had required quarantines with the high rates of COVID-19 that shut down lots of favorite destinations for families. You have been in the house for months, the weather's good and you want a break before getting back into gear for work and school.

While many opted for staycations or destinations within driving distance to be safe remember to follow local, state, and national protocols and mandates wherever you travel. The following are relatively safe vacations during the coronavirus that you can take, but remember: If you're cavalier about masks, hand washing or social distancing, lockdowns will last a lot longer, and no vacation is worth anyone's health or life.

- 1) Staycations! This will always be an option! Explore your own town. Camp out in your backyard.
- 2) Camping! Going camping is generally safe if you are socially distanced from anyone not in your household. To be safe, wear masks while hiking and on traversing trails, as well as in any common areas you may share with other campers at your site.
- 3) Renting an Airbnb! Staying in an Airbnb while social distancing is a safe choice, but you may want to take extra precautions: Consider bringing your own silverware, bedding and linens, and bring some disinfectant sprays or wipes to sanitize and disinfect surfaces before settling in and getting comfortable.
- 4) Hit the Beach! The beach is generally a safe option for a summer vacation if and only if you maintain social distancing and avoid crowded areas. You may want to exercise extra caution in areas like boardwalks, restrooms, and eateries.
- 5) Local and State Parks! Your neighborhood parks are likely underused and underrated gems: Many have lakes for swimming, playgrounds for kids (if open – bring hand sanitizer) and plenty of grass for playing and picnicking. If you are within driving distance of a state park, enjoy the scenery!

6) Go on a Social Distancing Road Trip! Pack everyone in the car and hit the road together. Feel free to take photos in front of any tourist landmarks you find but keep mask on as long as you are outside the car-and try to limit rest stop use.

7) Rent a boat! If you are traveling with just family and your immediate household renting a small boat is a good option. Be careful to keep a safe distance from other boaters and to disinfect surfaces of the boat just like you would anywhere be else on land. Also, do not tie boats together to socialize, as this can increase the risk of spreading the coronavirus.

8) Try Cabins! Instead of Big Hotels with a bustling lobby and breakfast buffet try a cabin or smaller lodge where you can be alone and cook your own meals together.

There are a few great apps out there that you can use to plan your adventure near or far. I have listed a few below for you to explore. Each is available for android and apple users:

- 1) Roadside America
- 2) Vrbo
- 3) Shippshewana Trading Place
- 4) Indiana DNR
- 5) The Indiana State Parks
- 6) Indiana Camping
- 7) Indiana Travel Guide
- 8) Visit Indianapolis
- 9) Indiana Hiking Trails
- 10) Drink Indiana Beer
- 11) Bike Carmel
- 12) National Park Service Tours

Peer Support:

Here we are at what was once thought of as the month when children would go back to school. Even that has changed for so many schools and families.

Today, I held our Peer Support Meeting outdoors near the Dreiser Square community center. We kept the group small so that we could properly socially distance. Everyone who attended wore a mask. It was great to get together and find out how everyone is doing. One of the most common threads that I heard today was people talking about their faith and feeling God was first and ever present in their lives.

People are more grateful for what they have. They also felt things are going to be alright. There was not a panic feeling among these people. We did talk about how we could "safely" reach out to our neighbors and friends. Just because we must distance, does not mean we still cannot help one another. Stay Safe!

The State Health Insurance Assistance Program

Ship News:

The State Health Insurance Assistance Program, SHIP, has been around for a while! In fact, both Medicare and SHIP are approaching a milestone this year. 2020 is the 55th anniversary of the establishment of Medicare and the 28th anniversary of SHIP in Indiana.

This year the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and SHIP will explain the impact of these programs: How they can improve the health of Hoosiers; How they help create a better health care system for people age 65 or older and younger people with disabilities who are entitled to Medicare. Fifty-five years ago, President Johnson signed legislation to establish Medicare coverage for people at age 65. In 1972 Medicare coverage was extended to younger people who are entitled to Social Security or Railroad Retirement Board disability benefits for more than 24 months. Although Medicare started as basic health coverage programs, it has evolved over the years to provide improved access to quality and affordable health care coverage.

SHIP's mission is to empower, educate, and assist Medicare-eligible individuals through outreach, counseling, and training to make informed health insurance decisions that optimize access to care and benefits. SHIP's vision is to be the known and trusted community resource for Medicare information. The WILL Center has SHIP counselors available to assist you with your Medicare needs. We are scheduling face to face visits by appointment only. Please feel free to call 812-298-9455 and ask for either Denise or Gloria.